The Honorable John Sarbanes
2444 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sarbanes:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public's trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.
We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

Maryland

AAHC, Inc. Silver Spring
Accessible Resources for Independence Glen Burnie
Accounting for Change Annapolis
Alice Ferguson Foundation Accokeek
American Association of Anatomists College Park
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc. Bethesda
Annapolis Green Annapolis
Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center Annapolis
Annie E. Casey Foundation Baltimore
Arundel Child Care Connections Annapolis
Asian-American Homeownership Counseling, Inc. Rockville
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals Baltimore
Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers
Association of Community Services Columbia
Association of Immunization Managers Rockville
Autism FYI Org Bowie
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. Baltimore
Baltimore Research
BioQUEST
CALMRA, Inc.
CASA of the Mid-Shore
Celebrate Frederick, Inc.
Charles County Charitable Trust
Christine L Manor, CPA Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County
Consumer Health First Potomac
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) - Prince George's County Riverdale
Crossroads Community, Inc. Centreville
Deaf Independent Living Association, Inc. Salisbury
Disability Rights Maryland Baltimore
Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, DC Jefferson
Elijah's Blessing Community Service Center Baltimore
Farr Commercial Annapolis
Federated Charities of Frederick Frederick
First & St. Stephen's United Church of Christ Baltimore
Frederick County 4-H Camp & Activities Center, Inc. Frederick
Fundraising Consulting Baltimore
Girl Scouts of Central Maryland Baltimore
Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay Salisbury
Glorystar Children's Chorus
Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville
Hanberry Associates, LLC Frederick
Handicap International Silver Spring
Harbel Community Organization, Inc. Baltimore
Healthy Howard, Inc. Laurel
Heritage Housing Partners Corporation
Corporation
Hero Dogs, Inc. Columbia
Historic Sotterley, Inc. Clarksville
Holton-Arms School Hollywood
HopeWorks of Howard County Bethesda
Human Resource Learning Center Columbia
Humanim Columbia
Inspiring Change Mental Health Services Baltimore
Intersection of Change Baltimore
It Takes Two, Inc. Crofton
Jesus for All Evangelistic Ministry, Inc. Gaithersburg
Ladies Auxiliary of the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Co. Ocean City
Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc. Laurel
Laurel-Beltsville Oasis, Inc. Laurel
Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Center, Inc. Laurel
Lighthouse - Youth and Family Services Catonsville
Linda Felder House of Etiquette, Inc. Baltimore
Living In Recovery Columbia
Marc Breslaw & Associates LLC Columbia
Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus Greenbelt
Maryland CASH Campaign Baltimore
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault Baltimore
Maryland Humanities Baltimore
Maryland Nonprofits Baltimore
Meier and Associates Frederick
Mental Health Association of Frederick County Frederick
Metro Maryland Ostomy Association Rockville
Miracle Ministry Rockville
Mission of Love Charities, Inc. Capitol Heights
Montgomery County Agricultural Center, Inc. Gaithersburg
(Montgomery County Fair) Chevy Chase
Moveable Feast, Inc. Perryville
National 4-H Council Rockville
National Dance Education Organization Adamstown
Networks of Change Hunt Valley
Nonprofit Village Baltimore
One Bright Bird Consulting, LLC Baltimore
Pathfinders for Autism Olney
Paul's Place Baltimore
Payroll Network Queenstown
Project Change Towson
Public Justice Center
Rebuilding Together
Redstart Creative
Redtop FC, Inc.
S.A.F.E. - Supplying Allergy Friendly and Emergency - Food Pantry Columbia
Service Coordination, Inc. Frederick
Shepherds of Zion Ministries International Church Silver Spring
Side by Side Laurel
SONA Consulting, Inc. Baltimore
Strong City Baltimore Baltimore
Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority, Inc. Takoma Park
The Arc Baltimore Baltimore
The Arc Maryland
The Bainum Family Foundation Bethesda
The Nora Roberts Foundation Silver Spring
The Sheridan Group
The Sober Truth Substance Abuse Treatment Westminster
The Village In Howard, Inc. Columbia
Total Care Services, Inc. Lanham
Tri-County Youth Services Bureau Waldorf
United Ministries, Inc. Baltimore
United Way of Frederick County Frederick
United Way of Washington County, MD Hagerstown
US Lacrosse
Vega Mala Consulting Rockville
V-LINC Baltimore
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. Lanham
White Rose Farm Circle, Inc. Taneytown

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
America Solidaria U.S.
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Atheists
American Bladder Cancer Society
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

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American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
American Brass Chamber Music Association
American Conference of Academic Deans
American Heart Association
American Historical Association
American Jewish Committee
American Medical Association Foundation
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
American Red Cross
Americans for the Arts
Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Amyloidosis Foundation
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Nature Center Administrators
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Baptist Women in Ministry
Barr Foundation
BoardSource
Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Camp Fire
Campion Foundation
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Mobilizing Network
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Commonwealth Fund
Council on Foundations
Council for Global Equality
Dance USA
Dementia Society, Inc.
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National Association of Charitable Gift Planners
National Association of Health Data Organizations
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)
National Association of Watch and Collectors
National Association for Shoplifting Prevention
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
National Council of Tribes
National Dance Education Organization
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence
National Human Services Assembly
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation
National Runaway Safeline
National Safe Place Network
National Tongan American Society
NEO Law Group
North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation
OPERA America
Partnership for America’s Children
Pension Fund of the Christian Church
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement
Project Wet Foundation
Project Managers Without Borders
Public Citizen
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Secular Coalition for America
Senior Executives Association
Seva Foundation
Skillman Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Smith’s Food and Drug
Social Velocity
The Arc of the United States
The Aspen Institute
The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The George Gund Foundation
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Philanthropy Forum
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers in Medicine
Volunteers of America
Voto Latino
Wallace Global Fund
WasteWater Education
Weingart Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Words Without Borders
World Day of Prayer USA
World Neighbors, Inc.
Youth Services America
YWCA USA